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Employment Outcomes for Workers With Disabilities

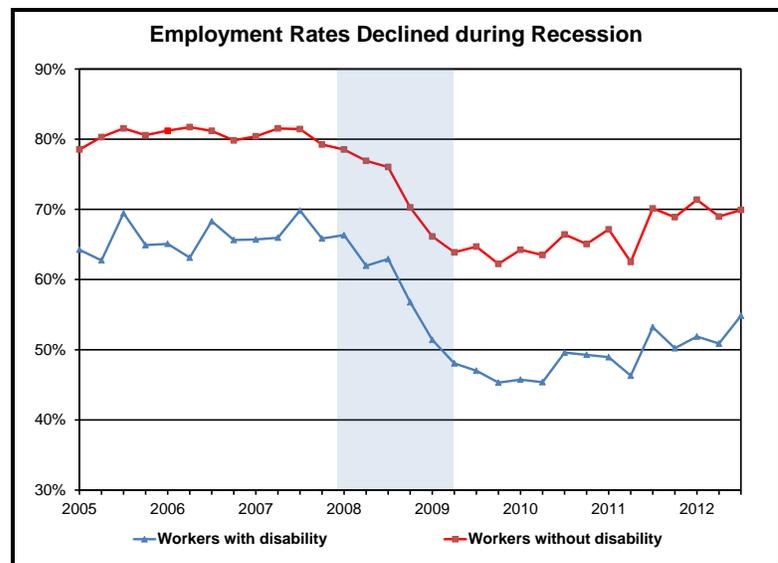
The Oregon workforce system provides employment and training services to a wide range of individuals, including those with disabilities. These services focus on improving the opportunities that lead to good jobs and a secure economic future. In this article we'll look at some of the key employment outcomes for people with disabilities, using data from national sources and Oregon's Performance Reporting Information System (PRISM).

Job-seekers with disabilities face unique challenges. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) considers a disabled person to have at least one of the following conditions: is deaf or has serious difficulty hearing; is blind or has serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses; has serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition; has serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs; has difficulty dressing or bathing; or has difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping, because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition.

National not-seasonally adjusted data show that workers with disabilities have a higher than average unemployment rate. In May 2013, BLS said the national unemployment rate for workers with disabilities was 13.6 percent, compared with 7.0 percent for those without disabilities.

Oregon's workforce system measures performance outcomes for all customers, including those with disabilities, in terms of three factors: becoming employed; staying employed; and wages.

The employment rate measures the percent of Oregon workforce system customers who found a job. During 2011, the system placed 264,945 people into a job, including 10,103 who had one or more disabilities.



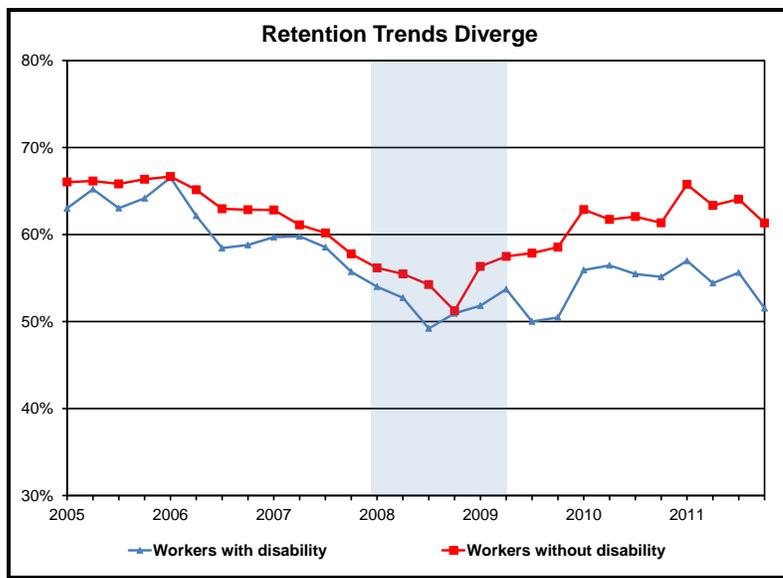
Graph 1

The employment rate for workers with a disability is lower than the rate for those without (Graph 1). The employment trend for workers with a disability is also more seasonal than for those without a disability, and typically peaks in the third quarter of the year. As was true for all customers of the workforce system, employment rates for individuals with disabilities fell precipitously during the recession. By its end, less than half of customers with a disability were able to secure work. The most recent data, from the third quarter of 2012, shows an employment rate of 54.8 percent for customers with a disability and 69.9 percent for those without.

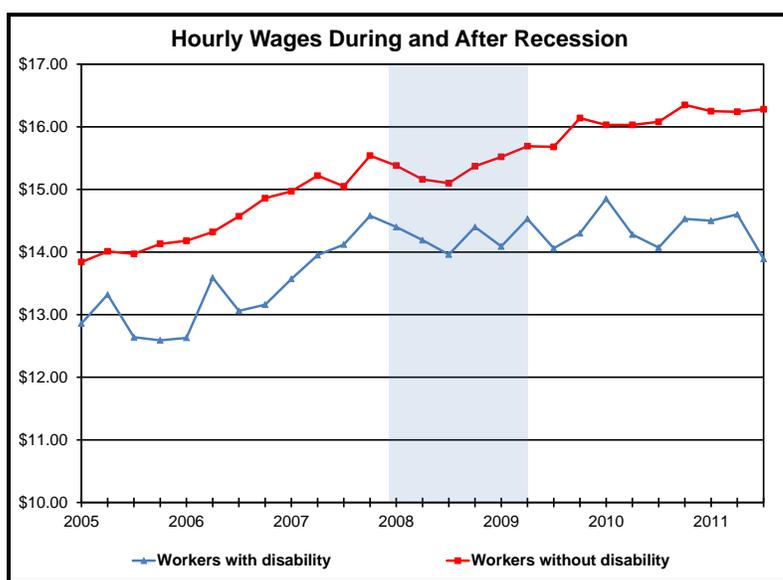
The retention rate records what percent of people who found a job kept that job during the following 12 months. The rate of retention among workforce system customers was not as volatile as the placement rate during the recession (Graph 2). However, retention rates did fall. By the third quarter of 2008, less than half of all people with disabilities placed into a job had retained it for a year. Post-recession data shows signs of a struggle to recover. For workers with a disability, the retention rate in the fourth quarter of 2011 was 51.5 percent, similar to recessionary levels.

Workers with a disability typically earn less than those without a disability. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median monthly wage for employees with a disability in 2010 was \$1,961, compared with \$2,724 for those without.

Oregon wage data shows that workforce system customers with a disability generally had a lower initial wage in their new job than customers without a disability (Graph 3).

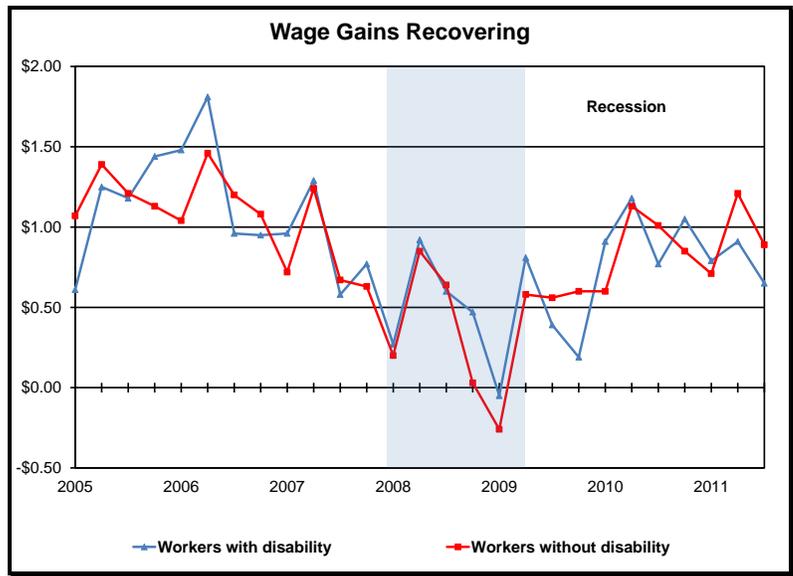


Graph 2



Graph 3

Oregon workforce system performance data also measure how much hourly wages rise over time for the workers who find employment. The trends for wage gain differ from the prior three graphs (Graph 4). In placement, retention, and initial wage, the “success” for workers with a disability is lower than for workers without. However, wage gain for workers with a disability is sometimes higher. For example, the second and third quarters of 2010 show wage gains for workers with a disability outperforming the gains of workers without a disability.



Graph 4

Like many workers, individuals with a disability experienced difficult times during the recession. According to Oregon workforce data, they are still not up to pre-recession levels in terms of job placement. Expectations are that Oregon’s economy will gradually improve, and since trends for workers with a disability mimic those of workers without, this should improve their employment outcomes.

PRISM Definitions:

Employment – The percent of customers employed in the quarter of exit or the quarter after exit.

Retention – The percent of customers employed in four continuous quarters after completing services.

Wage Gain – Fifth quarter average hourly wages minus first quarter average hourly wages.

For more information about services and programs for people with disabilities visit the [Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services \(OVR\)](#).